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ENCLOSURE TO MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD DATED 10 MARCH 1950, SUBJECT:  
THE DISSEMINATION PHASE OF THE NIS PROGRAM

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director, ORR  
Assistant Director, OCD

SUBJECT: The Dissemination Phase of the NIS Program

1. The NIS Program can be broken down into two phases -- production and dissemination. Under this concept, "Production" includes the collection of raw material, the writing of reports, and their editing. "Dissemination" comprises the preparation of the sections for printing, their printing, and their distribution, including the maintenance of a reserve. An examination of the progress of the Program to date leads to the conclusion that the production phase has developed commendably on the whole, but there is a question as to whether the dissemination phase has been sufficiently worked out to lead to sound policies. This question is raised without thought of hostile criticism, but with the idea that periodic self-examination is beneficial.

2. The dissemination phase can be broken down in point of time and circumstances into two elements: (1) the interim problem of serving the planners in peace-time, and (2) the final problem of serving operational commands and units upon the advent of war. Up to this time, the NIS Program has attempted to kill both these birds with one stone. The troubles of OCD in distributing the sections as printed and in maintaining the reserve are indications that the practicality of this effort should be examined. It is suggested that the root causes of the problems that have arisen are three in number, as follows: (1)

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

the incompatibility of the two elements of the dissemination phase; (2) an over-emphasis on the first element at the cost of the second, which is more important; (3) the impossibility of predicting the requirements of the second element either as to numbers of each NIS report required or as to the areas which will have to be covered. Each of these root causes is taken up in a separate paragraph below.

3. The two elements of the dissemination problem are incompatible for a number of reasons, as follows:

a. It is questionable whether peace-time strategic planners (speaking of the planners, proper, rather than their intelligence officers) dealing in broad terms with possible future situations will actually use the NIS reports, which require some research in their use because they are lengthy and detailed. Furthermore, the reports are definitely not estimates; they do not deal with the future. These planners are better served by short specific handouts which in substance project themselves forward to describe particular speculative situations in the exact detail required. Such handouts should be prepared by the personnel in immediate intelligence support of the various phases of planning, using the appropriate NIS reports, if they are available, as the fundamental source material. Thus, in this light, no dissemination of the NIS outside of intelligence channels is indicated in the planning field.

b. In time of war, the requirements of operational planners in the theaters of operations are completely different from those of the peace-time strategic planners. They must deal with the present in extreme detail. Much time and effort will be conserved for their supporting intelligence officers if the appropriate NIS reports are made available to them. This point applies with

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

less force in the case of operations officers of the smaller, more mobile units once these are in combat, because they will rely more upon support in the form of verbal advice or written handouts from their intelligence officers. But in any event, a broad distribution of the NIS in theaters of operations is indicated, since the reports will be extremely useful as source material for intelligence officers down to division or similar level. It is in the theaters, therefore, that the great bulk need for NIS reports will arise. The need will be common to all branches of all three military services. If this requirement is fulfilled, a great service to the theater will have been performed, since under such circumstances the theater headquarters, having disseminated the NIS broadly, need only amplify the NIS to fill these specific demands for basic intelligence which call for greater detail.

c. The strategic planners in peace-time jump about all over the world; hence, they require a vast reservoir of basic intelligence from which their supporting intelligence officers can draw. As long as the reservoir is available and can readily be drawn upon, the number of copies of particular NIS reports either on hand or in storage is immaterial.

d. War-time operations are confined to specific areas for which detailed information is needed. The best way to get this detailed information to all users is to issue the appropriate NIS reports on a broad scale. We must, therefore, be capable of making available large numbers of copies of certain NIS reports when the need arises.

e. Except for certain reports or sections of reports, the NIS will not be thumbed through or subjected to such rugged use in peace as it will in war. The war-time NIS issuance must therefore be wear-resistant; this requirement does not exist in peace-time.

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

4. If the dissemination phase of the NIS Program be scrutinized in the light of the above paragraph, it is believed that the conclusion is justified that the first, or peace-time, element of the dissemination phase is over-emphasized at the cost of the second, which is more important. As observed, the evidences of this over-emphasis are these:

a. The theory is extant that the fundamental purpose of the NIS Program is "to serve the basic intelligence needs of the Government." There is an attendant hypothesis that the responsibility for serving combat commands in time of war can be left to the military departments acting separately. Since there is no acceptance of the need for a unified effort to meet the war-time problem, there has apparently been no consideration of the view that the peace-time element of the dissemination phase should be met as a by-product of the greater problem of preparation for possible war.

b. As a consequence of these fundamental ideas, no plans are in being to ensure the maintenance of the capability of making available large numbers of specific but currently unidentifiable NIS reports upon the advent of war.

c. An inflexible program has been developed which puts emphasis on the printing of an arbitrary number of copies of all NIS reports regardless of area, rather than on the meeting of specific problems of dissemination from a reservoir of information.

d. According to present concepts, if any printing effort is made to meet the need for bulk distribution of the NIS in war-time, such an effort is likely to produce volumes of inferior wear-resistant properties to be utilized intensively under field conditions; whereas the present printing effort produces high quality volumes for which there is little requirement.

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

5. The impossibility of predicting war-time requirements for the NIS either as to number of copies or area must be included as one of the root causes of the present dissemination troubles, because the imponderability of the war-time problem seems to have defied the analysis applied. As the result, the arbitrary NIS reserve, which will include as many copies of the reports on Madagascar and Brazil as it will of those on Iran and the USSR and Spain, which may turn out to be our last European beach-head, is supposed to meet all future contingencies. Strategically speaking, such an idea is assailable on the face of it.

6. The problems of OCD in distributing the sections as printed, and in maintaining the reserve, raise in themselves a serious indictment of the NIS Program. We have seen the vacillation of the recipient agencies with regard to the number of copies they want; we have heard the proposals to burn surplus copies; the reserve itself causes serious storage problems, and its inherent unbalance in favor of the least important areas and sections is emphasized because they are less in demand. But, besides these troubles, there is the aspect of waste. If the reasoning in the paragraphs above is good, we must conclude that a great proportion of the money spent on the dissemination phase of the NIS Program goes down the drain, both in the form of NIS sections for unimportant areas in multiple copies, 99% of which will never be used, and through the medium of the present very high quality printing job apparently provided to withstand the rigors of disuse and storage.

7. In fact, a close scrutiny of the NIS Program leads straight to one major conclusion: The dissemination phase presents a challenge to ingenuity to devise a flexible plan for the issuance of basic intelligence to meet the needs of both peace and war.

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

8. Admittedly, no attempt can be made in this memorandum actually to formulate a complete plan, but some features which might be included in such a plan are given below:

a. Emphasis in the NIS Program could be placed on the production and maintenance of a reservoir of basic intelligence rather than upon the high-quality printing of large numbers of NIS reports for storage.

b. The JCS priorities for NIS production could be broken down into small categories of descending importance with apposite listings giving the required number of copies for each country report or priority category, considering peace-time requirements only.

c. If such decisions concerning numbers of copies proved to be too hard to get from the JCS organization, then the NIS Committee, or CIA itself, could make the decisions, subsequently notifying the interested agencies.

d. The criterion for the number of copies to be printed currently in the case of a given country report could be the peace-time demand for that report. Under this criterion, perhaps 10 to 100 copies of a report would be printed. The reserve maintained would be a retail supply only, in the magnitude of perhaps 5 to 20 copies.

e. The standard of the peace-time printing job could be adapted to peace-time requirements. Certainly it need not be nearly so high-quality a job as at present since the NIS reports are not subjected to hard wear in peace-time. It would be advantageous if the printing could be accomplished by some method utilizing a light, flexible master copy for reproduction purposes, because such masters could easily be stored against the need for running off small numbers of additional copies to meet unforeseen peace-time needs.

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

f. A plan could be developed for high quality war-time printing of NIS reports against a scale of distribution estimated in empirical terms. It does not seem that there would be any great difficulty in accomplishing the necessary printing job as part of the mobilization process upon the advent of war, or as part of the mounting process in the planning stage of a given operation. Nor would there be any difficulty in establishing the number of copies required and what areas were involved, since plans would usually precede operations by a period adequate to the preparation and implementation of the supporting NIS program.

9. It is requested that you give COAPS your reactions to the suggestions in this memorandum. It is reiterated that there is no thought of hostile criticism herein; any idea shown not to be helpful and constructive will be withdrawn forthwith.

**SECRET**